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The Rise of Social Media and the Fall of Internal Peace: How do Media Influence People's Fear of Mass Shootings?

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Background:

- ❖ Local TV News and Fear of Crime
 - ❖ Many studies have found a strong relationship between local TV news and increased levels of fear of crime (Elsass, Schildkraut, & Stafford, 2014).
 - ❖ Consumption of local news reporting on violent crimes causes people to have an exaggerated perception of how violent the world is (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003).
- ❖ Mediatization
 - ❖ How and where news is obtained, and the way people interpret that information, influences peoples overall understanding of an event in a phenomenon called mediatization (Schildkraut, 2012).
 - ❖ Mediatization shapes people's realities, often causing the reporting of events to become more real than the actual events (Schildkraut, 2012).
- ❖ Social Media
 - ❖ Social media offers unique features that largely haven't been implemented by traditional media.
 - ❖ Access from mobile devices, real-time news, 24/7 access, trending pages, hashtags, sharing of & commenting on news stories, citizen journalism, and many others (Orellana-Rodriguez & Keane, 2018; Sidhu, 2017; Duguay, 2018)
- ❖ Vulnerability Model
 - ❖ A research-based framework regarding people's fear of crime that indicates groups who have been historically victimized (like women) or groups who view themselves as vulnerable (like older people) have higher levels of fear because of their history and perceived physical vulnerability. (Jackson, 2009).

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Hypotheses:

- H 1: The more a person relies on social media as a news source, the more likely they are to fear being a victim of a mass shooting.
- H 2: Women are more likely than men to fear being a victim of a mass shooting.
- H 3: The older a person is, the more likely they are to fear being a victim of a mass shooting.

H 1: "Media Usage"

- ❖ Tested using regression.
- ❖ For each additional unit of social media usage - from never to everyday - there is a change of 0.113 in fear of being a victim of a mass shooting (this data is statistically significant at the p-value of .000).
- ❖ Social media usage has the greatest impact on the fear of mass shootings in comparison to other forms of media, based on its standardized coefficient beta of 0.200
- ❖ Table 1 shows that social media is the most statistically significant variable of the media types measured (it's the only one that's p-value is less than 0.001), with local newspaper, CNN, MSNBC, and daytime talk shows being the only other statistically significant variables.
- ❖ Hypothesis 1 was supported by the data.
- ❖ The positive unstandardized coefficient B of 0.113 shows that as social media consumption increases, so does one's fear of mass shootings.
- ❖ The standardized coefficient betas demonstrate that social media consumption has the greatest influence on one's fear of mass shootings, in comparison to other media forms displayed in Table 1.

Data:

Table 1

Media Usage by Fear of Mass Shootings

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta
(Constant)	1.656	
How often do you... Read a local newspaper from your hometown (in print or the digital version)?	-.045*	-.070
How often do you... Read a national newspaper such as USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, or The New York Times (in print or the digital version, app, etc.)?	.006	.010
How often do you... Read Online new websites (such as Yahoo News or Google)?	.040	.062
How often do you... Watch the national nightly network news (such as World News Tonight, CBS Evening News)?	.011	.018
How often do you... Watch Fox News?	-.028	-.043
How often do you... Watch CNN?	.080**	.121
How often do you... Watch MSNBC?	-.071**	-.107
How often do you... Watch the local TV news to learn about your area?	.040	.062
How often do you... Watch daytime talk shows such as The Ellen DeGeneres Show or The View?	.072*	.084
How often do you... Listen to a talk radio show that discusses politics?	-.001	-.001
How often do you... Get news from social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)?	.113***	.200

Chapman University on Survey on American Fears (2020-2021).
Notes. *P < .05; **P < .01; ***P < .001.
R² = .087
N of the model is 1,032.

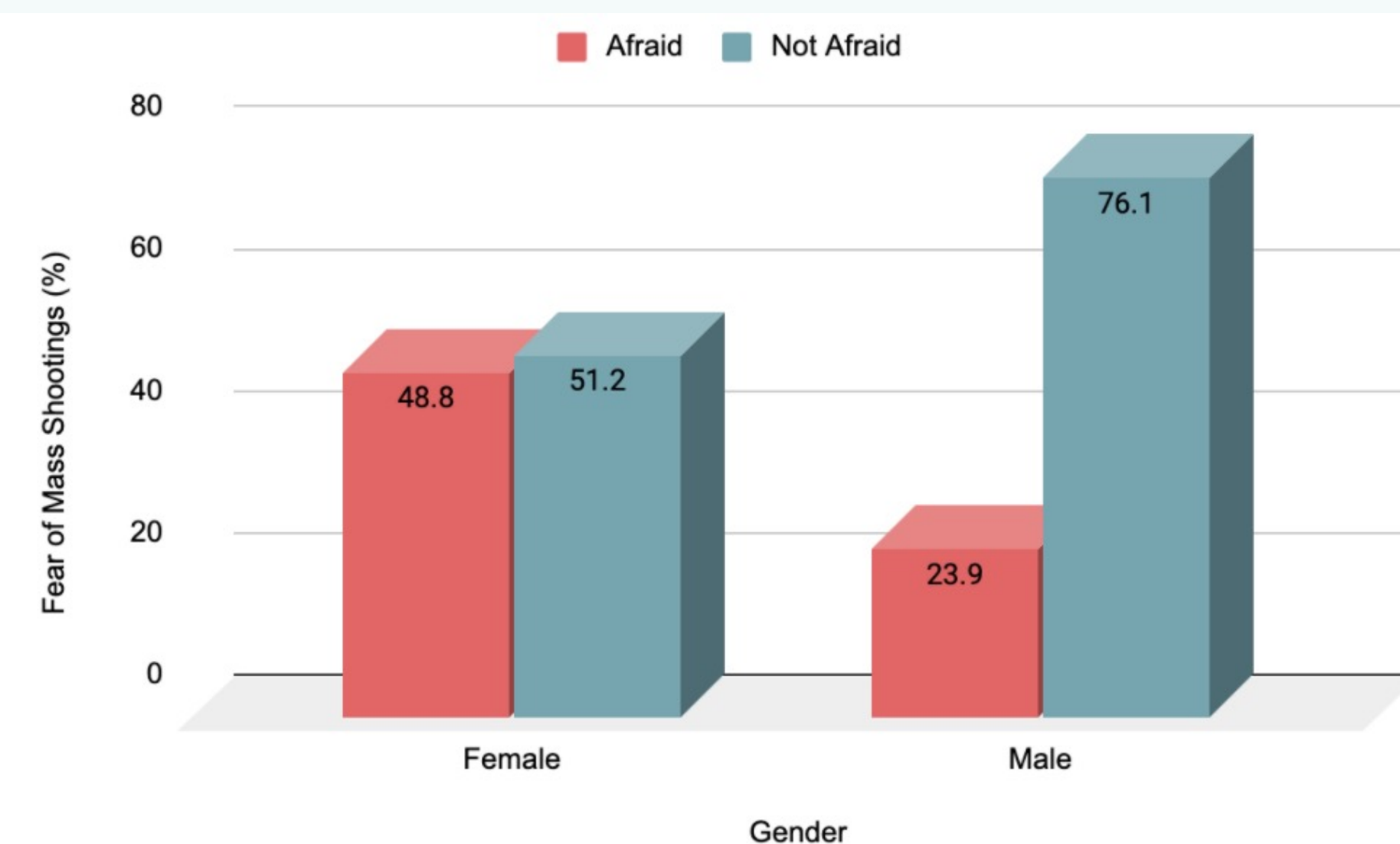


Figure 1. Gender by Fear of Mass Shootings. This figure depicts females and males fear levels of being a victim of a mass shooting.

H 3: "Age"

- ❖ Tested using a crosstab between fear of mass shootings and age.
- ❖ The data yielded the following results: 48.1% of people ages 18-29 are afraid of mass shootings, 42.5% of people ages 30-49 are afraid of mass shootings, 32.9% of people ages 50-64 are afraid of mass shootings, and 20.8% of people ages 65+ are afraid of mass shootings.
- ❖ This data does not support the prediction made in hypothesis 3
- ❖ Figure 2 depicts a general trend that the older someone is the less likely they are to fear mass shootings.

H 2: "Gender"

- ❖ Tested using a crosstab between fear of mass shootings and gender.
- ❖ 48.8% of women answered that they are afraid of being a victim of a mass shooting, in comparison to 23.9% of men who indicated the same.
- ❖ Figure 1 visually displays this difference of 24.9%, which reveals that women are more afraid of mass shootings than men.
- ❖ The data supports hypothesis 2

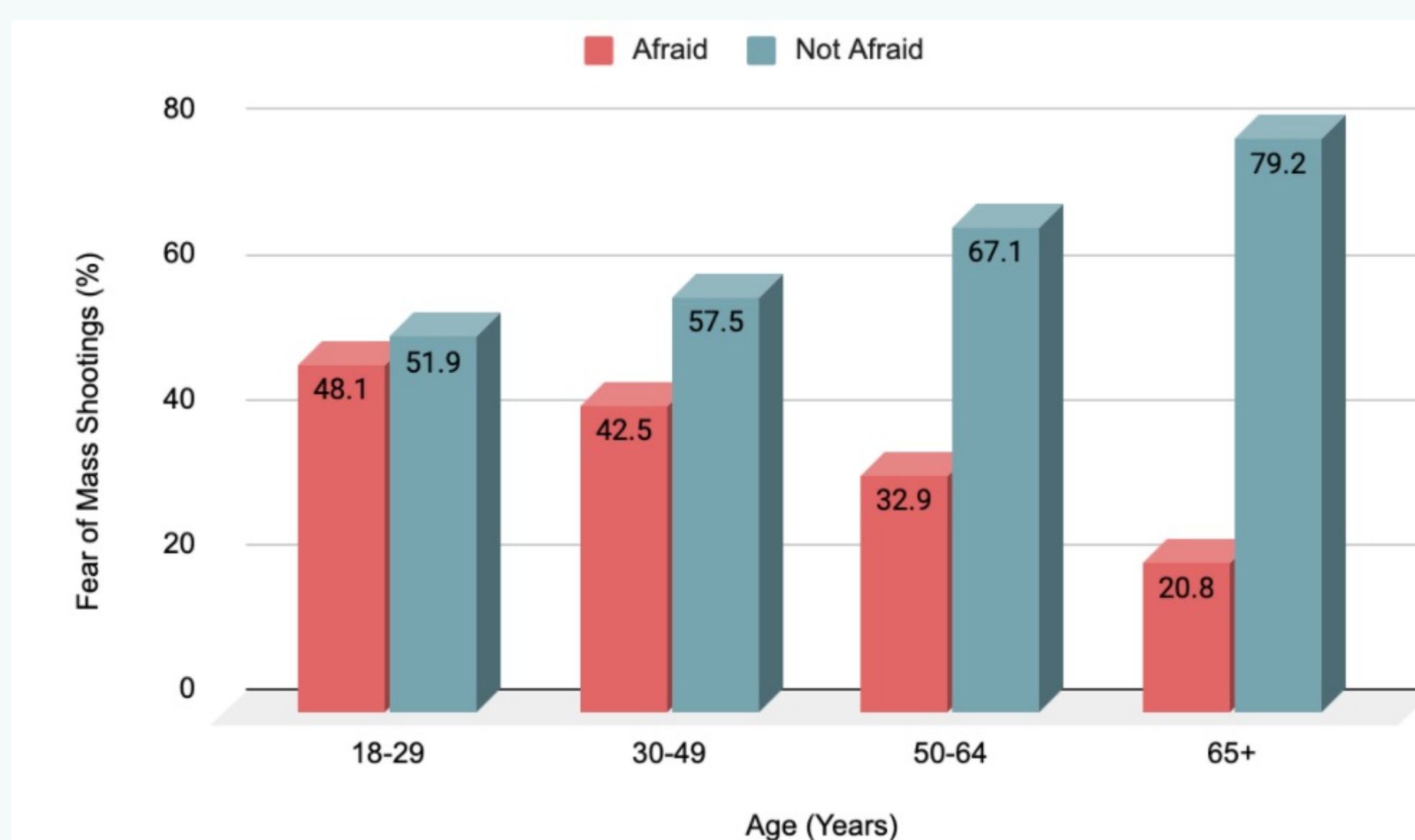


Figure 2. Age by Fear of Mass Shootings. This figure depicts different age group's fear levels of being a victim of a mass shooting.

Findings:

- ❖ H 1: Media Usage
 - ❖ Social media, more so than any other media form examined, impacts people's fear of mass shootings.
 - ❖ The more someone uses social media to retrieve news, the more likely they are to fear being a victim of a mass shooting.
- ❖ H 2: Gender
 - ❖ Women are more likely to fear being a victim of a mass shooting than men.
 - ❖ Supports previous findings on gender and fear of crime.
 - ❖ Supports the Vulnerability Model
- ❖ H 3: Age
 - ❖ Generally, the older someone is, the less likely they are to fear being a victim of a mass shooting.
 - ❖ Age group 18-29 was the most fearful of mass shootings.
 - ❖ Does not support previous findings on age and fear of crime.
 - ❖ Does not support the Vulnerability Model

Conclusion:

- ❖ The rise of social media, coupled with the increasing occurrence of mass shootings, has had profound impacts on Americans. Mediatization's role in fueling unhealthy levels of fear of mass shootings must be understood in order to create a healthier and better-informed population. Further studies should be conducted to drive understanding, awareness, and development of mitigative measures to protect people.
- ❖ While there have been numerous studies conducted on the fear of crime and gender, deeper analysis of the connection between gender and fear of mass shootings is necessary.
- ❖ Extensive research has revealed the high levels of fear of crime exhibited by older people. But additional studies should be conducted on younger generations to identify the issues that our future leaders wrestled with during their formative years. As society progresses into the future so must its research, keeping up with the underlying causes - such as technological innovation and generational shifts - that spark changes in significant societal trends.